



# Fast Facts

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

## OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

In August 1993, the Office of Women's Health (OWH) was established by Governor's Executive Order within the California Department of Health Services (DHS). OWH is organizationally at the executive level of DHS and reports to the director. OWH guides women's public health services in a positive, comprehensive way by promoting health services and reducing the burden of disease and disability among women and girls in California. OWH also serves as a focal point within DHS for setting and monitoring public health policies and promoting more thorough and effective approaches to improving women's health.

OWH recommends and monitors women's public health policy, enhances visibility and prominence of women's health needs, and advances cost-effective solutions to address women's health needs through the following:

- Supports and coordinates activities of the 26-member Women's Health Council, which is appointed by the DHS director, that provides a forum where statewide experts on women's and girl's health issues and representatives of a wide variety of private and public agencies can meet to discuss, review, and propose policy recommendations and program efforts.
- Coordinates the California Women's Health Survey, an annual study of 4,000 women concerning various women's health topics, which is coordinated by OWH and brings together 15 programs within DHS, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, the Department of Social Services, and the California Medical Review, Inc. OWH coordinates question development and analysis of the survey and produces a publication entitled, *Data Points*, which contains one-page, topic-specific summaries of the survey's key findings.
- Coordinates the Gynecologic Cancer Information Program. As a result of the passage of Assembly Bill 833 (Ortiz), DHS was directed to place priority on providing information about gynecologic cancers to consumers, patients, and health care providers. OWH has developed health education materials on the six gynecologic cancers (cervix, fallopian tubes, ovary, uterus, vagina, and vulva) in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.
- Conveys information on women's health to organizations, policymakers, and the general public.
- Monitors and makes recommendations regarding proposed legislation and regulations that impact women's health.

- Develops a framework for women's health policy and programs that reflect current research on the health status and access to health care of women and girls in California.

### **Publications and Resources**

OWH has produced a number of important publications and information resources, including:

- *Data Points* is a publication that consists of brief, readily understandable summaries of key findings from the California Women's Health Survey. The initial issue of *Data Points* was released on November 10, 1998, and received widespread positive media attention. Issue two is scheduled for release in 2001.
- *Gynecologic Cancers – What Women Need to Know* (2000) is a comprehensive pamphlet describing gynecologic cancer facts, risks, warning signs, and early detection information. This pamphlet is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.
- *Individual Fact Sheets for Cervical, Uterine, and Ovarian Cancer* (2000) contain information on the signs, risks, ways of detection, and treatment for these cancers. It also includes the estimated number of cases of each cancer type in California as well as survival and mortality statistics. These fact sheets are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.
- *Directory of DHS Programs Serving Women* (2001) is a directory of DHS programs that serve women or programs that have a focused intervention or outreach activity targeted specifically to women.
- *Preventing Domestic Violence: A Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. In October 1998, DHS and the Domestic Violence Advisory Council produced this strategic policy report that identifies policy areas to be addressed over a three- to five-year period.
- *Voices for Women's Health* was produced, in collaboration with the Women's Health Council, to document the statewide and regional health concerns of diverse providers and consumers of women's health services in California. This information was gathered at six town hall forums conducted by OWH in partnership with the Women's Health Council and the Women's Health Collaborative.
- *Profile of Women's Health Status in California, 1984 - 1994*, released in 1997, serves as a benchmark for measuring progress in women's health. This report is a statistical profile of women's health status in California and addresses a wide variety of women's health issues, including the leading causes of illness, hospitalization and death among women, the prevalence of risk factors for these health problems, and patterns of social indicators, such as income, employment, education, marriage, and family composition.